

Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



Rosemary HARRIS : *Power and Powerlessness in Industry: An Analysis of the Industrial Relations of Production*. London, U.K., Tavistock Publ., 1987, pp. VIII + 245, ISBN 0-422-609-X

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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Power and Powerlessness in Industry: An Analysis of the Industrial Relations of Production, by Rosemary Harris, London, U.K., Tavistock Publ., 1987, pp. VIII + 245, ISBN 0-422-609-X

This is a socio-anthropological study of two ammonia plants in the UK focused on relations among supervisors, operators and managers, the attitudes of men to shop stewards, as well as the relationship between the skilled trade people and the rest of the personnel. Contrary to the position taken by marxist scholars, the author questions the significance of class boundaries in the explanation of what actually happens in the daily work at shop floor level. The «diabolic» interpretation of managers as exploiters and clever manipulators is out of reality in the settings studied in depth on the basis of interviews and observation. The management people appear here rather as not adequately prepared to appreciate the goodwill potential represented by the rank-and-file and they do not respond enough to the justified worries of the personnel regarding the security of jobs, adequate fulfillment of work duties, handling the waste pockets, application of the skills, and the initiative potential represented by the subordinates. The management ineptness originates from a variety of sources: priorities much different at various levels of power and decision making, the lack of an adequate preparation to handle human resources, the underestimation of organizational skills, etc.

Modern production conditions studied by the author differ very substantially from the less sophisticated industrial conditions and it is significant how much the goodwill potential of the rank-and-file personnel needs to be taken here into consideration. The highly sophisticated technological equipment is at stake. Depending on the devotion and the sense of responsibility of the personnel, much trouble may be created or avoided. It would be naive to perceive the operating and maintenance personnel as being reduced to the minor role in comparison with the equipment. It is much up to the supervisors to show sensitivity in the field of human relations in order to avoid the sense of insecurity, handle valid complaints, reduce tension between various categories of the personnel, create several attractions in relation to work and employment, stimulate a good atmosphere of team work, act as a suitable link between the rank-and-file and the higher ranks of management.

Social scientists have the inclination to project their own ideological and intellectual biases on the shop floor reality. They see there what they want to see coming with the ready schemes and imposing them on the people approached by them. R. Harris seems to be quite successful in avoiding this obvious danger due to the fact that she had the courage to preserve her own identity and did not try to pretend to be somewhere else than herself. This allowed her to register many valid facts and interpret them in a nonopinionated manner. This is probably the most important asset of her study.

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The Implementation of Technological Change, par Carol Beatty, Kingston, Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, 1987, 137 pp., ISBN 0-88886-172-9 et ISSN 0317-2546

Cet ouvrage de Carol Beatty, dans la collection Research and Current Issues du Industrial Relations Centre, est le fruit d'une recherche portant sur le thème général des impacts de l'informatique. Plus précisément, l'auteure étudie le rôle des facteurs humains et organisationnels dans l'accroissement de la productivité suite à l'introduction d'une nouvelle technologie comme la conception assistée par ordinateur (CAO).